

SOFTWARE

PREVIEW

The number of photo-editing packages is growing, but Photoshop and Paint Shop Pro tend to steal most of the limelight. An often-overlooked contender is Serif's PhotoPlus. The latest version, X2, has some advanced features that even the similarly priced Photoshop Elements lacks.

One is layer mask, which allows you to create realistic photomontages. There's also the ability to record actions as Macros, plus the very useful Filter Layers, which lets you apply filters non-destructively. Even the full version of Photoshop lacks this.

PhotoPlus X2 also has the useful Makeover Studio. This helps you improve portrait photos by quickly removing red-eye and blemishes, and even applying fake tans.

We will be reviewing this program in full next month.

Jim Martin

Reviews Editor



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AVANQUEST

Who Do You Think You Are? Deluxe Edition 2

★★★★★

£30 inc VAT

From www.shop.avanquest.com/uk

This BBC2 TV programme tie-in is really Family Tree Maker (FTM) 2006, which is now two versions old. The current version is 2008, reviewed below. We're reviewing this older version here because it's the last one to include the full printing and presentation features that helped to make FTM a best seller for several years and still the best version available to UK users.

The default Family screen shows husband and wife with their children and parents, plus buttons to summon the editing screen, extra spouses, media scrapbook and a web search for your ancestors. Almost every field lets you assign the source of its data. There's no provision for photos in this view, though.

Its wide range of charts, trees and reports includes all-in-one pedigree, hourglass, ancestor, descendant timelines and family group sheets. Some of these can be embellished with pictures, colours, fonts and borders.

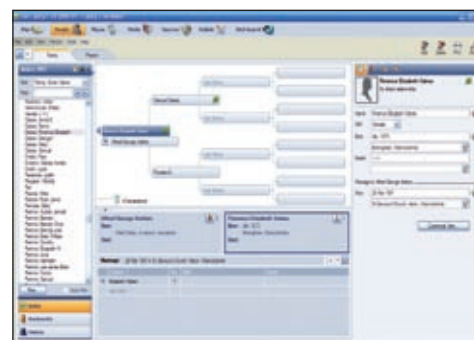
Family Tree Maker pioneered the creation of Family Books, where you compile your own 'book' complete with a table of contents, an index, source and location lists, and a choice of almost all the charts and reports.

SUMMARY

- ✓ Easy data entry
- ✓ Book report with trees
- ✗ No photos in narrative reports

GENEALOGY SOFTWARE Requires Windows XP/Vista, 256MB RAM, 400MB disk space, internet access

PRODUCT CODE 5 016488 114509
DETAILS www.shop.avanquest.com/uk



▲ The classic FTM default screen shows personal and family facts similarly to other software

You can optionally incorporate your own text or scanned items, plus FTM's unique, paginated, indexed, drop-line descendant charts.

To use FTM to the full, you'll need an internet connection for registering the program and unlocking your free 30-day subscription to Ancestry.co.uk, which has 800 million records online. You can share your family tree by uploading it to Ancestry's collection of user-submitted trees, but you then lose control – and ownership – of that tree.

A guide to getting started and a user manual are included. You also get family trees and video excerpts of the celebrities from all three TV series and a training video on DVD. Considering that this costs half as much as Family Tree Maker 2008, it's clearly the best choice for tracing your family's history.

James Taylor

ANCESTRY

Family Tree Maker 2008 Platinum Edition

★★★★

£54 inc VAT

From www.gameseek.co.uk

Family Tree Maker (FTM) has been top of the genealogy software charts for some time, but FTM 2008 may significantly reduce its fan base.

Existing users will mourn that several of its previous features, including the paginated 'book' charts, are gone. The book itself has been ditched, too. You can't print it yourself but have to upload it to Ancestry Press to bind and send to you. It will be \$30 (about £15) plus shipping costs for a 24-page book. The program still reserves the right to distribute your file as it likes. Books produced in previous versions of FTM cannot be edited in Ancestry Press or FTM 2008.

Other charts and reports that have been left out include the fan trees, the hourglass tree, the all-in-one tree and the useful genealogy report. Some of these may be reintroduced in a future patch, which has been promised but not yet delivered.

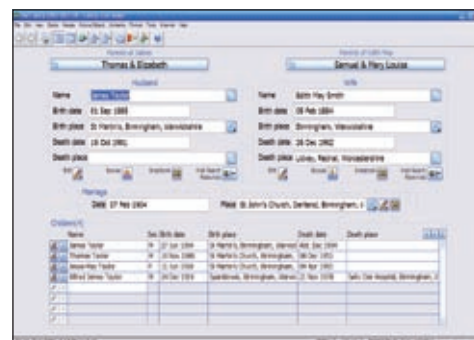
The new interface is an improvement. The default People view displays lots of useful information, combining a pedigree chart and family group. There's also a personal timeline,

SUMMARY

- ✓ Better grouping of data onscreen
- ✗ Some useful charts and reports missing
- ✗ Book printing now costs extra

GENEALOGY SOFTWARE Requires Windows XP/Vista, 256MB RAM, 400MB disk space, internet access

PRODUCT CODE 5 016488 116633
DETAILS www.ancestry.co.uk/shop



▲ The default screen packs in information previously only viewable by clicking through buttons and menus

optionally including world historical events. The new Places view lists all the places in your database, and there's an option to print the map.

The Platinum Edition of Family Tree Maker 2008 provides six months' access to Ancestry.co.uk and a printed user manual. You can also get a single CD version for £20 that gives 14 days' access to Ancestry.co.uk, and a Deluxe Edition for £40 that gives three months' access.

The new features make research and analysis easier, but rely heavily on the internet. FTM 2008 seems to be designed more to increase income from Ancestry.co.uk and Ancestry Press than increase the program's usability. You'd be better off with Who Do You Think You Are? (above).

James Taylor

AHEAD Nero 8



£47 inc VAT

From www.amazon.co.uk

Nero 8 has come a long way from the original Burning ROM. Instead of being a disc-burning package, Nero 8 can turn its hand to just about any media task you care to mention, organising your photos, videos and music tracks, as well as editing and authoring videos and music. It can also look after TV recording and double as a media centre interface on your TV. For only £47 including VAT, this program is great value.

The installation process was lengthy, taking over 30 minutes and two reboots. Once it had finally completed, we had a new Start Menu entry with no fewer than 16 entries. Nero will try to associate itself with almost every type of media, so you'll need to untick anything that you want to keep associated with another application.

Although the list of programs is daunting, there's a SmartStart icon on the desktop. This is the best place from which to approach this enormous suite. It's split into five sections: Start Page, Rip and Burn, Create and Edit, Home Entertainment and Back Up. RSS feeds at the foot of the window let you see the latest news from Nero.

Alternatively, you can set your own feeds by going into the options.

This new interface gives a much more unified feel than the one in the previous version. However, it's a little odd that there are options for burning data and audio discs, ripping CDs and copying discs always visible on the left-hand side.

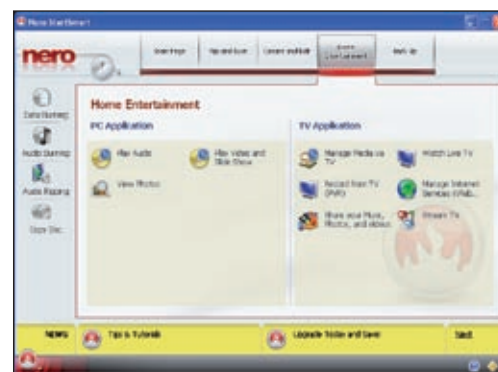
In total, there are 14 applications. Under Rip and Burn, you'll find short cuts to Nero Express and Burning ROM tasks such as copying or burning discs, as well as jukebox discs, which are CDs or DVDs filled with MP3, WMA or Nero's own MP4 format audio files. Create and Edit includes options to edit photos, create a slideshow, make disc labels and convert audio or video files. The Author, Edit and Capture Video icon launches Nero Vision 5, which is where you will find most of the new features.

Nero Vision 5 is powerful, allowing you to burn movies to Blu-ray, HD-DVD (when writers become available) and DVD. It also lets you import AVCHD footage. Both this and burning to HD discs are features that are missing from Roxio Easy Media Creator 10 (*What's New, Shopper* 239). You can also upload edited videos straight to YouTube and other services.

SUMMARY

- ☒ Excellent disc-burning tools
- ☒ Great media handling
- ☒ Blu-ray and AVCHD support

DISC-BURNING SOFTWARE Requires Windows 2000 SP4/XP/Vista, 256MB RAM, 9GB disk space
DETAILS www.nero.com



▲ Nero 8 can handle just about any disc burning task you can imagine

If your PC has one or more TV tuners, Nero 8 can act as a PVR. There's also Nero Home. This is an alternative to Windows Media Center and can stream media from any networked computer. Nero 8 provides several plugins for streaming Nero-format media, as well as burning different kinds of discs directly from the Windows Media Center interface.

Add in backup features that allow you to recover your PC from a disk failure, and you've got a comprehensive suite. Updates for Nero 8 are free, but you need to uninstall the current versions of the applications to use them.

The price is the biggest reason why Roxio Easy Media Creator 10 is still our favourite, as you can now buy it from www.amazon.co.uk for just £34 including VAT. If you are going to take advantage of Nero's Blu-ray and AVCHD support and media centre functions, though, then this is still a great choice.

Jim Martin

Also consider...

OPENOFFICE OpenOffice.org 2.1

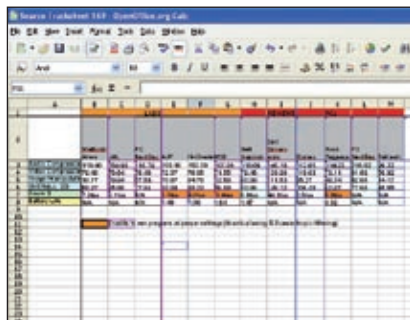


Free

From www.openoffice.org

BEST BUY OpenOffice is a completely free office suite and it's brilliant. It might feel a little old-fashioned next to Microsoft Office's flashy features, but it has a number of excellent applications including a word processor, spreadsheet, database and presentation program. It's an essential piece of software for any PC owner.

OFFICE SUITE Requires Windows 98 or later, Pentium processor, 128MB RAM, 800MB disk space
DETAILS www.openoffice.org
FULL REVIEW Sep 2007



ADOBE Creative Suite 3 Design Premium

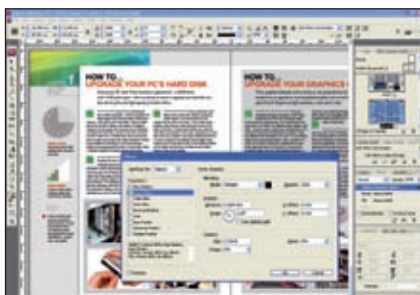


£1,440 inc VAT

From www.amazon.co.uk

BEST BUY Adobe's Creative Suite has quickly become the best bundle of creative software. With its new Design Premium, it's got even better. The bundle includes InDesign, Photoshop Extended, Illustrator, Acrobat Professional, Flash Pro and Dreamweaver – everything you need, whether you're creating work for print or the web.

CREATIVE SOFTWARE Requires Windows XP SP2/Vista, 512MB RAM PRODUCT CODE 29500009
DETAILS www.adobe.co.uk FULL REVIEW Aug 2007



ACRONIS True Image 10 Home



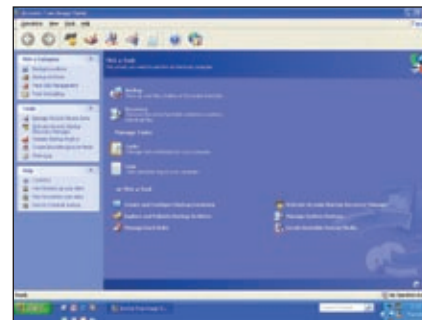
£15 inc VAT

From www.ebuyer.com

BEST BUY True Image 10 from Acronis makes a complete copy of your PC's hard disk, operating system and all, so you can restore it to a working state easily.

It can make backups of folders and emails and even back up the settings of applications, providing you with everything you need to make sure your data is protected at all times.

IMAGING SOFTWARE Requires Windows 2000 or later, 133MHz processor, 128MB RAM, 150MB disk space
PRODUCT CODE ATI10 DETAILS www.acronis.com
FULL REVIEW Apr 2007



LOGMEIN LogMeIn Pro

★★★★★

£8/month inc VAT
From www.logmein.com

LogMeIn lets you access your computer over the internet from a remote location. Interaction takes place using a browser such as Firefox or Internet Explorer, so there is no need to download special software. Your home computer must have the LogMeIn client software installed and be booted up and connected to the internet. When you log on to your account at the LogMeIn homepage, choose from a list of your registered computers that are currently connected and you're in.

LogMeIn lets you directly manipulate your desktop either full screen or within the browser window. Responsiveness is dictated by the speed of connection between the remote and local computers, but with a broadband connection most applications run fine. If the connection seems slow, you can reduce the colour depth or resolution to save bandwidth.

You can also copy and paste between clipboards. The Pro version provides an additional file transfer tool, which is much faster than dragging and dropping. You also get a file-sharing tool, which lets you share files from your desktop while a meeting tool allows others to visit your computer. The Pro version lets you print from local applications to the remote PC, but the sound-streaming tool is limited to 64Kbit/s.

This is a well-implemented remote access tool. LogMeIn Free is adequate for simple remote access tasks, and the full package is cheaper than rival GoToMyPC.

David McKinnon



▲ Access your PC from any other internet-connected computer

SUMMARY

- ✓ Fully featured remote access
- ✓ Drag and drop between computers
- ✗ Low bit rate sound streaming

REMOTE-ACCESS SOFTWARE Local PC requires Windows 98 or later or any OS with Java or ActiveX working within a browser, internet connection. Target PC requires Windows 98 or later, internet connection, browser supporting 128-bit or 256-bit encryption

DETAILS www.logmein.com

DIVX Author 1.5

★★★★★

£25 inc VAT
From www.divx.com

DivX Author 15 is a video-conversion utility that specialises in creating DivX files. It accepts a variety of input formats, including unencrypted DVD, and takes advantage of DivX 6's ability to incorporate DVD-style animated menus, chapters and slideshows into the DivX file.

The tabbed interface makes light work of importing, trimming and reordering videos, adding chapters and menus and exporting the results. Chapter points are defined manually or mapped across from the source DVD. It's also possible to preserve subtitles and even create your own from scratch. However, menus from the original DVD are lost, so you'll need to redesign them using the basic built-in templates. Advanced export quality settings are hidden in the Preferences dialog box.

The DivX format provides excellent video quality in small file sizes, but so too does WMV, H.264 and a variety of other formats. Each of these has limited support amongst mobile devices, but this is particularly true of DivX files with embedded menus, which will play only on devices that are DivX Ultra Certified. Rival software Roxio Copy & Convert (reviewed in *What's New, Shopper* 235) converts videos to DivX format without menus, but it also supports a wide range of other formats for playback on iPods, PSP, mobile phones and DVD players.

With its lower price, Roxio Copy & Convert has wider appeal. However, if you're confident that DivX is the only format you need, DivX Author 1.5 is hard to fault.

Ben Pitt



▲ DivX Author 15 creates highly compressed video files with DVD-style navigation controls

SUMMARY

- ✓ Straightforward controls
- ✓ Support for menus and subtitles
- ✗ Supports DivX output only

VIDEO-ENCODING SOFTWARE Requires Windows XP/Vista, 733MHz processor, 128MB RAM

DETAILS www.divx.com

Also consider...

ADOBE Photoshop Lightroom 1.0

★★★★★

£149 inc VAT
From www.parkcameras.com

BEST BUY Adobe's Lightroom is everything a digital camera enthusiast could want. It helps manage your images, process RAW files, correct colour, retouch and export to a range of media. It's brilliant to use and, although designed for professional photographers, a great choice for anyone with an expensive camera.

PHOTO-EDITING SOFTWARE Requires Windows XP/Vista, Pentium 4 processor, 768MB RAM, 1GB disk space
PRODUCT CODE 19250102 DETAILS www.adobe.co.uk
FULL REVIEW Jul 2007



STEGANOS AntiVirus 2007

★★★★★

£20 inc VAT
From www.steganos.com/uk

BEST BUY Steganos AntiVirus uses software from Kaspersky, so you get the best anti-virus protection for a lot less money. In our recent Labs test (*Shopper* April 2007) it beat every other anti-virus application hands down. For full system protection, you'll need Steganos Internet Security, which costs £30 including VAT. Particularly impressive was its email virus detection rate of over 90 per cent.

ANTI-VIRUS SOFTWARE Requires Windows 98 or later, 300MHz processor, 128MB RAM, 50MB disk space
DETAILS www.steganos.com/uk FULL REVIEW Apr 2007



ROXIO Easy Media Creator Suite 10

★★★★★

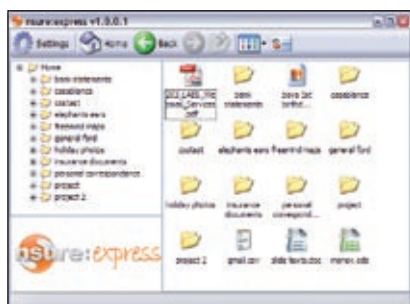
£34 inc VAT
From www.amazon.co.uk

PRICE CUT!

BEST BUY This suite comes with almost all the media-editing tools you'll ever need. Its greatest strengths are its tight integration between all the modules and its friendly, task-oriented interface. With the recent drop in price, it's now even better value and it's the best media suite you can buy.

VIDEO-EDITING SOFTWARE Requires Windows XP or Vista, 500MHz processor, 128MB RAM (1.6GHz, 512MB for Vista), 3.2GB disk space
PRODUCT CODE 048068411
DETAILS www.roxio.co.uk





▲ Nsure:express is supremely easy to use, as it looks similar to a standard Explorer window

NSURE nsure:express

★★★★

From £2 inc VAT/month
From www.nsureexpress.com

Online backup provides protection against both computer malfunction and physical damage to backup equipment in the local environment. Nsure:express is an online backup application that provides 2GB of remote storage space for your important files.

The most striking aspect of nsure:express is its simplicity. There is little to distinguish the application window from a typical folder view. You can drag and drop files and folders directly from your desktop and right-click on a file to delete, rename or download it to your local computer. There is no option to view image files as thumbnails, however, which would have made it much easier to identify files. Unlike other online backup services, nsure:express is an application, which means you can't use it as a handy repository into which you can dip from any computer with an internet connection.

Data is encrypted with a user-defined key before it's sent to the nsure:express server. However, access to your space is controlled by a separate username and password, which automatically logs you on when you start the application. So if someone steals your computer, they could still delete your backups, even if they can't read them, since you don't need to enter the user-defined key to delete them. We are surprised that this is possible.

Automated backup is a common feature of online and offline backup applications, but is conspicuously absent here. While setting up an automated system can be a pain, the lack of one changes backup from a passive task to one you must remember to do. This is a regressive step in computing.

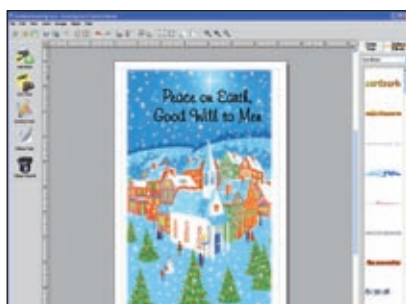
The simplicity of nsure:express is admirable, and £2/month is reasonable for 2GB of online storage space. But given the lack of automated backup, and the inability to access your files from multiple locations, nsure:express needs improvement before we can recommend it.

David McKinnon

SUMMARY

- ✓ Very easy to use
- ✓ Inexpensive
- ✗ No automated backup

ONLINE BACKUP SOFTWARE Requires Windows 2000 or later, 512MB RAM, 20MB disk space, broadband internet connection.
DETAILS www.nsureexpress.com



▲ Base your design on one of the 22,000 templates in Greeting Card Factory Deluxe 6

NOVA DEVELOPMENT Greeting Card Factory Deluxe 6

★★★★★

£15 inc VAT
From www.amazon.co.uk



The arduous task of choosing the perfect greeting card is made worse by the amount of money they cost. Making your own might sound like the cheapskate option, but it's more convenient when you need a card in an emergency and allows you to add a personal touch that friends and family are sure to appreciate.

Greeting Card Factory Deluxe 6 will pay for itself in no time. Buy packs of blank cards in bulk and you'll keep the cost to a minimum. Folded A5 cards cost as little as 25p each and are printable by most inkjet printers.

After you've installed the program, a wizard guides you through setting up your printer, so you know which way to feed in the card for printing both front and back. It's a shame it doesn't warn you to change settings in your printer driver to configure it for printing on card, as well as the size of the media.

Once you're happy with the test prints, you can get on with designing cards. There's a neat template browser with thumbnails of the 22,000 designs. Thumbnails are zoomable, so you can check the text and finer details of each design before opening it. There are cards for just about every occasion but if you find one's missing, it's simple enough to insert your own images or photos along with text in any one of the 1,000 supplied fonts.

You can print envelopes and edit photos using the built-in photo editor. There are plenty of other project types to choose from, including invitations, signs, postcards, gift tags, calendars and even party hats. There's also an option to send e-cards or burn designs to CD. Finally, there's a useful address book so you can keep your contacts in one place and set reminders for birthdays and anniversaries.

Greeting Card Factory Deluxe 6 is great fun to use and is sure to save you money.

Jim Martin

SUMMARY

- ✓ Twenty-two thousand templates
- ✓ Simple to use
- ✓ Print cards and envelopes at home

DESIGN SOFTWARE Requires Windows XP/Vista, 800MHz processor, 128MB RAM, DVD-ROM drive
DETAILS www.novadevelopment.com



▲ Movies on TomTom aims to let you watch your favourite blockbusters on your satnav

X-OOM Movies on TomTom

★★

£18 inc VAT
From www.amazon.co.uk

The prospect of being able to use your satnav as a portable video player is an enticing one. Rather than shelling out on a separate PMP such as the Archos 605 WiFi (reviewed in *What's New, Shopper* 239), you can use your TomTom's screen to watch videos when you're not using it for navigation.

TomTom devices don't have a video player, but Movies on TomTom installs one when you transfer your first video file. It doesn't match the style of TomTom's existing menus, though. Using the touch screen, you can easily drag the slider to any point in a video and increase or decrease volume.

You can use the software for converting videos for Navman, Navigon and Medion models, but this can be done using freeware applications. Only DVDs without copy protection can be converted. You can also choose DivX, WMV, Real and AVI files already on your hard disk as the source video. You can set the quality, resolution and size that you want for the resulting file, so you can fit it to the available space on your memory card.

While this all sounds great, the software felt unfinished and unreliable. We tried it under both Windows XP and Vista, where it refused to show a preview of our video and had an unreliable progress meter. Frustratingly, the resulting 'high-quality' video had a frame rate of 12fps, which was far from smooth when played on our TomTom One.

Video was squashed to fit on to the One's standard-aspect screen. We found no option to override this and so we had to endure unnatural-looking people onscreen. Another drawback is that satnavs such as the One have no headphone output.

Unfortunately, because Movies on TomTom doesn't actually let you watch your DVD movies on your TomTom, we simply cannot recommend it.

Jim Martin

SUMMARY

- ✓ Turns your TomTom into a video player
- ✗ Won't convert your favourite DVDs
- ✗ Unstable, unreliable video conversion

VIDEO-CONVERSION SOFTWARE Requires Windows 2000 or later, 700MHz processor, 256MB RAM, 10GB hard disk space
DETAILS www.x-oom.com